Shangri-LA

Summer '52

EDITORIAL

Since I am a revolving editor, I should, presumably, write a revolving editorial. I don't know how this is done, however, so this editorial shall be a revolting one instead. It shall revolt against a number of things.

Item: Why, for example, should S-F fan publications number their pages according to the prosaic decimal system? We read of modern calculating machines using the binary system. Why not we? In the binary system there are only two digits: "1" and "0". Our pages are so numbered. See if you can figure this numbering system out for yourself.

Item: Why should the average editorial either praise the magazine's contents to the skies or else apologize abjectly for not doing a better job? Praise or criticism is properly left to the readers, preferably in letters to the editors. Suffice it to say that the contents of the magazine generally reflect the capabilities of the editors and the contributors.

Item: Why bore you with Shangri-LA's organizational details? Well, why not? Shangri-LA is the official magazine of LASFS, is supported by funds from the club treasury, and augmented by monies sent in by Associate members. Editorial policy is set by a four-man board, each of whom, in turn, takes over an issue. Outside help and unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, provided that persons submitting material don't get mad if we reject their masterpieces.

Item: Why should fanzines give free publicity to fanzines, conventions, worthwhile activities, etc. We don't. San Diego fans paid us $832 for stating that this Westercon will be the finest yet. The Science Fiction Advertiser gave each member of the Editorial Board a free copy of the "Outsider" for a short plug, and 15% of contributions to the worthwhile "Walter Willis Trip" are to be turned over to our four-color cover fund. And so forth.

Item: Why should fanzines print poor fiction? Shangri-LA has printed poor prose and poor poetry in the past. We won't do it any more, even if by refusing to do so, we are failing to encourage struggling embryonic writers. If any s.e. writers want to appear here, let them polish up their manuscripts. Incidentally, there's a possibility that we may have a real gem next issue. There's a fellow with the improbable name of Blackbeard who....

Item: What are you sticking around for? Go read the rest of the mag, already!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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ILLUSTRATIONS: Audrey Clinton, Con Pederson, Jim Wilson

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STAFF: Ed Clinton, Freddie Curtis, June Konigsberg, Con Pederson

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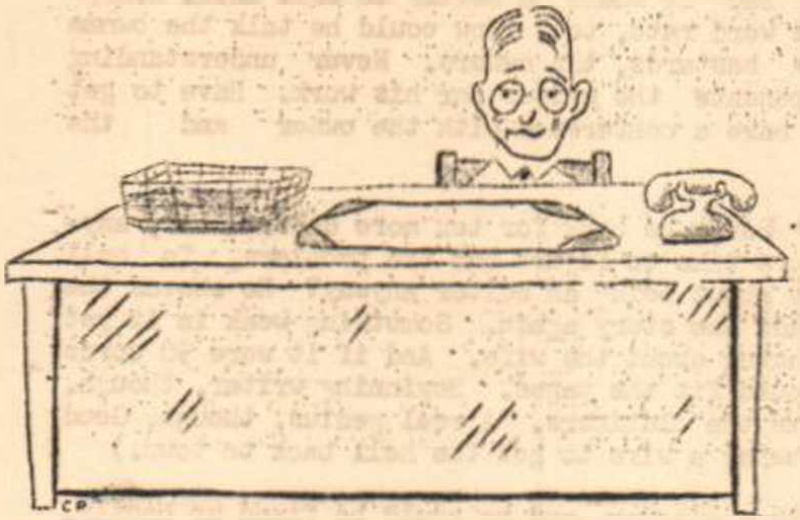
COVER: From the lithographic press of Walter J. Daugherty

PUBLISHING



Rog Phillips

The editor paced the floor impatiently. It was nine-thirty, and the mailman hadn't arrived yet. He should have come half an hour ago. Suddenly the door burst open. Here it is, the mailman said, extending the brown nine-by-twelve envelope. Thanks, the editor said, grabbing the precious package.

He went to his desk and shoved other business aside. Tearing open the flap, he extracted the letter accompanying the manuscript. It was from Joseph Greenhorn. A tear of admiration filtered into his eye as he realized this was a first submission. One glance at the manuscript and he realized that here was a story he would be unable to lay down, once he picked it up.

He picked it up. Three hours later he remembered to cancel his lunch date with the blonde babe across the hall in the insurance office. To hell with her, he thought. This is more important. (He had just got to sheet 28 where the first climax was.) So he kept on reading.

That night he stayed up late, reading the manuscript for the tenth time. He was testing the power of the story to resist boredom. The only way to test that is to read it fifteen or twenty times one after another. If you don't get the same thrill on the tenth reading, the story lacks something. Also, that way you can find the places that get boring after several readings, and when they begin to stand out like sore thumbs, you can figure out what to do about them.

Two days and 54 readings later, most of the weak spots were standing out like sore thumbs. They could easily be fixed up. Right now the editor was looking ahead, planning what spot in the mag to put the story in, and what issue. The story was 23,482 words long. A hard length to fit in. It would take 37 pages, lacking two lines. A joke or something would have to be used to fill the rest of the last page. Or maybe there was some way of padding the story an extra 90 words, or of cutting it 810 words.

He started reading the story over and over, trying to find places where a word could be cut. He found some, but they added up to only 59 words.

A tight story, well written. That took another four days. His wife was mad at him because he spent all night on the thing every night.

He worried about the author, too. The poor guy must be on pins and needles waiting for word about his story. But it would be better to wait until everything was fixed up. There was the word rate, too. How could he talk the owners into paying for it? They were bastards, the owners. Never understanding that money couldn't begin to compensate the writer for his work. Have to get that worked out. (Make a memo to have a conference with the owner and the stockholders.)

The owner's in Florida, damn him. Won't be back for ten more days. Well, anyway, it will take him that much more time to figure out the problems. To hell with the wife. What does she know about being an editor anyway? He shoves the wife out of his thoughts and reads the story again. Something weak in it yet anyway, or he wouldn't be thinking about the wife. And if it were 90 words longer or 810 words shorter, it would fit the pages. Beginning writer, though. Not up on those technicalities like the oldtimers. A real genius, though. Good story. (Make a memo to send the owner a wire to get the hell back to town.)

God, what a story. Only one weak character, and he could be fixed up easily. Maybe the writer wouldn't stand for it, though, and the poor guy is probably getting impatient. To hell with the owner. Send the author a check. But the owner has to okay the check too, damn him. There ought to be a law against Florida. Or the office could be moved down there. That would be better. Then he could lie on the beach and study the manuscript.

God, three weeks already since the script came. Wonderful story. Too bad about the clumsy length. Too good a story to cut or pad even ten words. And it'd be a hellura note to stick a joke after the end. That ending leaves one gasping with admiration. What the hell can I do? God, I hate to pass this story up. Some other editor will get it, and I'll lose my job when the boss finds out I passed it up. And the poor writer. All those weeks. But I gotta do something. I'll write a letter.

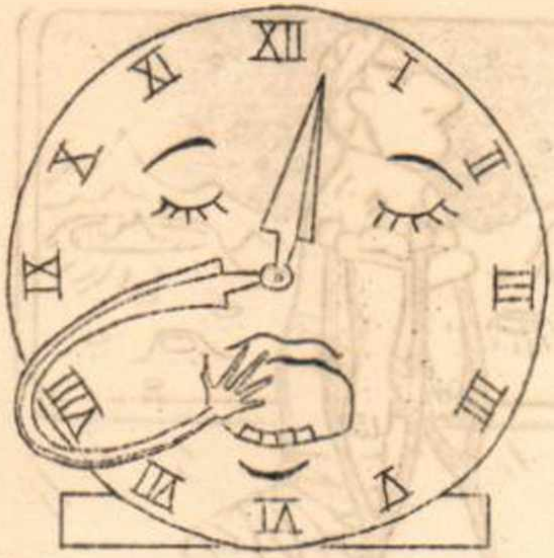
God, I've written fifty letters and torn them up. How can I tell the guy what I mean? If I owned the rag I'd publish it and to hell with the clumsy length and that weak character. Good story. Only half of it bores me so far. I wonder--such a genius might understand even if I didn't write a letter--and he probably understands that I did my best. God, I need a vacation in Florida myself after spending day and night on this story for over a month. Maybe the guy'll know--I'll just stick a rejection slip in with the manuscript and send it back. A favor to him, really. He'll find a better market. My rag's no good for quality stuff like this anyway. Readers too damn stupid to appreciate it. Wonder why he sent it. God, I'm ashamed to even sign my name to the rejection slip. Don't think I will--

* * * * * *

The above is a worm's-eye view of what an editor does not do. Even though you think he should--to your story. Here's what actually happens--

Editor fixes postman with baleful glare. Throw the goddamn crap on that table over there. Don't bother me. He starts to turn back to his scissors job, thinks again, and gets up. In fairness to the others he has to lift up the pile of submissions and put the latest arrivals on the bottom. He returns to his desk.

(Continued on Page 11000)



JUST A MINUTE

During the last quarter a lot of water went under the bridge and a lot of hot air out of the windows of the clubroom.

It mostly started about three meetings before the last Shaggy, with a Daugherty tirade on the associate-member setup, and LASFS incompetence in general. This was followed in quick succession by Everett's Gallup Committee, which soon metamorphosed to the Implementation Committee—it was originally intended to poll club members and find out what was wrong with LASFS. At the same time, Eph broached a plan for the revival or rejuvenation of Shangri-La, which called for a permanent board of four editors, and resulted in this issue.

The Implementation Committee brought forth a series of recommendations, essentially boiled down from the Gallup report, whose acceptability had been debated and voted upon. More debate followed. Then came an amendment to the old constitution, permitting the club to supplant it. This act followed with immoral speed, with the result that LASFS now has a new constitution and set of by-laws barely distinguishable from the old by a greater degree of coherence.

Meanwhile, Director Quattrochi became a father, and hereupon traveled the busy road to wrack, ruin, and resignation of his office due to too much outside work. Other resigners included Senior Committeeman Clinton and Editor Kepner. Successors were Forry for director (this created a nice parliamentary dilemma, since with Frank's and Ed's resignations, Forry's quitting his junior committeeman post left an exec committee of two to appoint him director. However, a little bench-packing and un-resigning set all well), Dot Faulkner and Ev Evans as junior and senior committeeman, and Jim Wilson as editor.

Highlights of the past dozen meetings (outside of a sort of distorted view of how the politburo looks in action) have included lengthy commentaries and inside views of Palmer and Ziff Davis by pro's Rog Phillips and S. J. Byrne; a new compartmentation of all Forry's announcements, called "Forrest Murmurings"; a colorful and startling display of thiosulfate crystallizing between polaroids; S. J. Byrne discoursing on Andean treasures; Sterling Macoboy from Australia, complete with dry wit; Richard Grey, Esq., same; and a most hysterical announcement that a ten-mile-long spaceship is hovering over San Diego.

Incidental intelligence: The treasury has been climbing steadily all spring.

And, of course, there was the usual speculation as to who's going to think up the next "rational" explanation for the flying saucers, creation of the universe (ah, there, Hoyle!), and the Magazine of Fantasy and SF.

THE PROBLEM OF TRACTION

David L. Fox

It has occurred to me that there is one problem of life on other worlds which has, apparently, so far escaped the notice of both the factual and fictional writers on extraterrestrial subjects. That difficulty may be stated in one word--traction. Here is a question which on Earth interests us only when we attempt to walk on a slippery surface, or when driving down a road a mile a minute and a pedestrian or a sharp curve looms ahead.

On such a world as the Moon, or even Mars, this problem would be of grave importance. On the Moon, for instance, an object weighs about one-sixth of what it does on Earth. Therefore, not only would wheeled vehicles have difficulty making sharp turns at speeds much above five miles per hour, but even a man in a space suit would find himself in serious trouble if he were not careful.

Imagine the plight of a man out for a little exploration, who, having mastered some of the skills of walking under low gravity, is bounding along when he sees an abyss some thirty feet ahead of him. Naturally, his first thought is to stop short of it. But this is not to be. Our victim has been travelling at a good six or seven miles per hour, and against the inertia of his two-hundred some pounds of mass, the traction afforded by the feeble gravity of the Moon is futile. As our friend pops over the edge of the chasm and begins his fall, he observes another truth of lunar physics--although he weighs only a sixth of his normal Earth-weight, he has only to fall six times as far as a given Earth distance to end up just as messily. Since our hypothetical abyss is about 600 feet deep, our man learns this the hard way.

To come back to the wheeled vehicles; Mr. Clarke, in The Exploration of Space, refers to the probable use, on the Moon, of electrically driven trucks, with sealed cabins for the drivers, being used to haul dirt, equipment, etc., about the lunar base--and, in fact, it is hard to conceive of any kind of large installation without its complement of trucks, personnel cars, etc. But here low gravity, in some cases an advantage, makes a basic difficulty--of what use is a truck which cannot be driven over ten miles an hour? True, on a straight highway, with no curves and no obstructions, one might drive up to twenty or thirty miles per hour with some degree of control. One could stop in about the dis-

tance that a car going 120 or 180 miles per hour could on Earth, and the effect of a head-on collision would be only that caused by 20 or 30 miles per hour terrestrial velocity. However, for any transportation involving numerous sharp turns, the vehicle would be reduced to a crawl; and an operation requiring many starts and stops would consist in large part of long periods in which the vehicle either skidded endlessly to a long-delayed stop, or accelerated from a standstill with ludicrous slowness; the driving wheels spinning ineffectually as they failed to grip the lunar soil.

The only mention of any solution to this problem in fiction or non-fiction that I can recall is in Robert Heinlein's "The Long Watch", in which a character rides a "track-rocket" across the Moon's surface; starting rapidly, traversing curves over a lunar mountain, and stopping abruptly.

Here, then, are two parts of a possible solution. First, where possible, build a track system on which the cars are not only guided horizontally, but are locked onto the tracks by under-wheels. This would be useful where there are regular runs, such as between a large base and a space-port. Second, for light personnel vehicles for use independent of tracks, small rocket engines mounted fore and aft, to give quick starting and braking. A car of this sort could get its propulsion mainly from its wheels, with the rocket used for starts, stops, and emergencies.

The above are two partial solutions to the problem, which may be useful in the special cases described. The probability remains that as man establishes permanent bases on Luna, the other moons, or Mars, he will be plagued by the relative lack of firm contact with the ground underneath him. He may well envy those groundlings who had sense enough to stay on a world with gravity strong enough to keep a man's feet firmly on the ground.

SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISER
1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale 1, California. 75¢/years, $1.00/8 issues

Originally a mimeographed fanzine consisting entirely of ads, and distributed among the small group of fantasy collectors and traders, SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISER has grown to become virtually a professional publication that offers much more than interesting ads. It is currently just about the only publication extant which publishes and pays for critical writing on science fiction.

The current issue, for example, contains a multitude of very capable and discerning books reviews, has a half-tone illo for a cover, and features the second and concluding part of a long and exhaustive article on A. E. van Vogt by Arthur Jean Cox. All of this in addition to a variety of ads and announcements of extreme interest to even the most casual science fiction enthusiast.

The man primarily responsible for this is Roy Squires, who some years ago took over the staggering FANTASY ADVERTISER from its previous publisher, and with a goal in mind, really turned what had been just a sort of fantasy shopping news into a very important and interesting magazine. Printed by photo offset, from material varityped by the hardworking Squires himself, SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISER is a pleasure to behold and to read.

Recommended unreservedly to anyone interested in science fiction.

POTPOURRI —

BY ANTHONY MORE

Extracts from editorial comments, Volume 1, No. 6, of the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction:

LEST DREAMERS DREAM by Ray Stradivari

Your editors have often said that science fiction is really fantasy, under the guise of a label. Herewith as neat a little pastiche on the futility of progress as you could want. You will see more of this writer; we have 73 of his stories in our backlog, and this present work was selected, before it was written, for a leading annual anthology.

COO COO by R. Beta Noir

Herewith a happy addition to our Bureau of Unimaginative Zoology. Who could resist the temptation of the Coo Coo, a most remarkable little creature whose outstanding attribute, we assure you, is revealed only on the last page of this delightful short story. Science fiction in the lighter vein is all too rare.

BLESSED ARE THEY by H. H. White

Here we revert to I—for in this case it was I who bought this story. It is probably no secret that H. H. White is my partner in crime in writing these blurbs and editing MFSF. Here fantasy and science are skilfully blended by one of the subtlest masters of the detective story now active.

THE TIME MACHINE by H. G. Wells

It is always one of the pleasures of editing a magazine to be the first to print a new writer. Here we have such a find—and we're willing to bet that

readers. Title should be: The Snob. Number three is again of the editors, this time doing a balancing act between science fiction and fantasy. The guy at the bottom has lost his head over the whole thing.

Number four is a portrait of the editors again, looking for something they lost way in the middle of the air. Number five illustrates the current issue of Astounding Science Fiction. Number six is particularly fascinating, truly in the science fiction vein. It's a study of the inside of a pullman coach loaded with sleepwalkers. Number seven is quite yellow.

Number eight is based on the folk song, Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party, or Smilin' Through, while number nine shows what happened when Bonestell threw something at the editors. Number ten? The editors again, playing hide and seek! Number eleven is obviously not a study of the editors—or is it? Number twelve makes sense, as do numbers fourteen and fifteen. Number thirteen is a somewhat indeterminate item, and could well be known as either Peek-A-Boo or We Are Not Alone.

Anyway, they make good time-killers. And even Bonestell, sometimes!

****

For a moment let us turn our attention to what time is bound to judge as one of the greatest of all science fiction short stories. It is to the eternal credit of Anthony Boucher and J. Francis McComas that they bought and published this masterpiece; for, so remarkable a story is it, that editors and editorial taste being what they are, it is possible that Old Man Henderson might not have sold elsewhere.

Kris Neville, who if he never writes anything again will be famous forever for this one, has said that Old Man Henderson isn't really a science fiction story and that the tale could have been written around any such momentous achievement as being the first man on the moon. This is not quite true, for, even though time and reality may pass it by and render it forever untrue, it remains science fiction not for its material content but for the eternal message it bears. Who would dare say that it is not a science fiction concept that the glamour of scientific achievement passes into the commonplace?

It would not be hard to go into unreasoning ecstasies over Old Man Henderson. If ever there has been a perfect story, perfect in construction and form, this is it. In it is reflected the horrible unthinking cruelty of little children, the bitterness and futility of heroism, the fickleness of the human mind. From the opening sentence the reader senses, through the smug mind of young Joey, the imminence of something unpleasant; it is soon apparent that Old Man Henderson is a person who has descended from a height; but the shock of learning what his ahievement had been, told as it was in opposition emotionally to the casual, condescending nastiness of the child Joey who lacks all comprehension of the heroism he derides in Old Man Henderson, is utterly stunning. It is something we have never thought of before, that our hero, the man who will someday go to the moon, that his fame, like all others, will pass away. This story, more than all the epics and expansive space operas ever written, puts man and his momentary ahievements in proper perspective.

CONTD PAGE 10!!

we'll see his name again. This present effort by Wells is a time-worn variation on a time-worn theme--as fresh and charming as the title suggests.

* * *

Whatever may be said about the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction by its detractors--which, by and large, includes the writer of this article--it is the first magazine in the field to publish consistently good fantasy humor. The term "fantasy" is used here because it is somewhat difficult to determine where humorous science fiction becomes fantasy. For example, what is it that so clearly demarcates the de Camp-Pratt Gavagan's Bar stories as fantasy, while Nearing and Bretnor are just as clearly science fiction? It is not enough to say that it is the content of the stories; what is so particularly scientific about the Gnurrs or Professor Ransom's noble adventures?

This, of course, is an excellent demonstration of the anomaly of the magazine itself. Regardless of how you as a reader may feel about the material in MF&SF this mating of fantasy and science fiction is thoroughly incestuous, and has produced some startling offspring. Yet for the moment, let us regard these mutant creations with cold objectivity; we shall see that, of their type, they are excellent. Comment has already been made on the humorous stories the magazine has published. There is, in addition to this, another large group of stories which can be classified only as whimsy, and that only if the term is applied to ostensibly serious works as well as satire.

The most famous of these whimsical tales, of course, is Damon Knight's Not With A Bang. Now some, and quite reasonably, might object to the classification of this grim yarn as whimsy; yet, there is so patently an immense joke about the whole situation that it is funny that such a mismatched man and woman should find themselves in such a situation, and funnier still that the nonsensical mores and ill-adapted sex code of the twentieth century should destroy mankind.

Out of 182 total stories, MF&SF has published 88 yarns which may reasonably (that is to say, within the all-embracing framework of this writer's definition, and the less strict definition of Boucher and McComas) be classified as science fiction. A lot of the best have gone unsung; a lot of praise has been heaped on a few yarns that certainly did not deserve it.

Among the unsung, particular mention might be made of Arthur C. Clarke's Superiority. Clarke is rapidly becoming one of the genuine masters of the mature realistic school of science fiction, but here he has turned his hand completely around and made magnificent fun of science, and more especially and importantly of armament races in general. Superiority is certainly one of the funniest science fiction stories ever written.

Another story which has never received its full share of fame may perhaps have been denied that fame because it was published without a title. This was the yarn by Idris Seabright, published as the title contest story in April, 1951. Touchingly and beautifully written, is is one of the best stories ever written on the relationship of Earthmen to a conquered race. For the record, this writer named it Cave of Earth, but got nowhere.

* * *

Undoubtedly the most distinguishing thing about MF&SF has been its cover designs. Looking at them laid out side by side, all fifteen issues, one is struck first of all by their color, and second by their incomprehensibility. Yet a closer examination produces results. For example, the cover on the first issu is undoubtedly a picture of the editors, one of them waving hello to all the new readers. Number two is from the Bureau of Imaginative Zoology, and represents a certain famous writer with a story in that issue regarding all of the

MOVIE REVIEW

The Man in the White Suit: Ealing Studios, 1952

You've got to see it! Most of you have done so, I hope--if you have, you know what I mean. If you haven't—Get going! I mean—well—It's funny, for one thing, it's stef, it's Alec Guinness, it's fast-moving British comedy—any one of those would wedge me out to see the thing.

Well, first off, let's look at the story. A young chemist invents a synthetic fiber for clothing which is immortal, wearless, dirtless, tearless and fearless. That's about all there is to it. Huh? Well, add a few details. This chemist (Guinness, of course) has been working as a laborer or janitor in several textile mills, until someone finds out that he's forged requisition slips and built himself a gigantic bem of a sort of glorified retort for distilling the complicated organic chemicals that make up his super-orlon. Romantic interest occurs when the daughter of an industrialist (played by Joan Greenwood, with silky brilliance) recognizes Guinness after he's fired from her fiance's factory. Guinness also mixes it with a labor group, with the result that his interests--promoting his invention—are at odds not only with those of the bosses, who feel they must suppress the wonder cloth to save their industry, but also with the desperate desire of the workers to keep their jobs making clothes that will wear out and be replaced. This leads eventually to the chase for which British comedies and Guinness are so deservedly famous.

Sterling performances are turned in by, of course, Guinness and Miss Greenwood; in addition, superb character performances are done in the part of Sir John, a crustacean Peer who is the baron of the mill owners; and a Danish (or German) butler who throws Guinness out of Miss Greenwood's house only to be lock out himself later; and a little girl who engineers Guinness' escape from the hands of the labor leaders.

Acting credit of another sort, and a real rave at that, must be given the Thing--Guinness' still, or whatever it is. Accompanied by syncopated blurping noises which soon build into charming, identifying music, it bubbles, steams, and flickers lights from the center of a coil in such a way as to steal every scene it enters. Furthermore, its opportune and perfectly-timed explosions (or lack of same) add tremendous dramatic effect.

Favorite visual effect: Guinness escaping from the mill owners by walking down the side of a house supported by his miracle thread, while a popeyed industrialist smashes his car watching. Favorite scene: Guinness hesitating over signing a contract with the owners (which they would immediately use to suppress the miracle), and fascinated by a pen-lighter offered him to sign with, asking "How much ink versus how much petrol?"

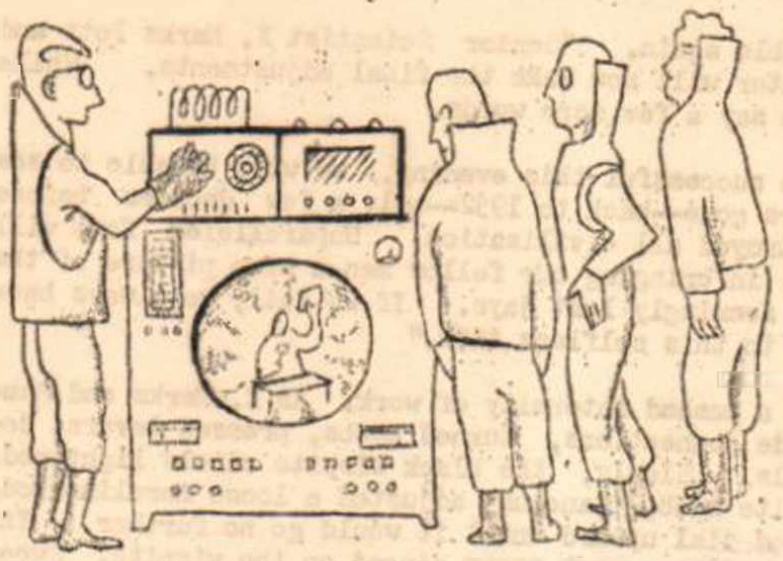
If you didn't miss it, see it again.

The DWELLER in the Garage

To begin with I should state that the old Dweller in the Garage has more or less retired from book selling, his Best Cellars are now devoted to trophies: shrunken heads of editors who have failed to meet their monthly thousandollar quota of purchases from his Agency. Also, I have semi-officially retired from fan-columning, but have been lured back into quarterly print by Editor Konigsberg, whose suave persuasive powers would melt an iceberg. To quote a recent telephoniconversation. "Ackerman, all the edges in Shangri-LA are going to be justified (i.e., even-edged) this issue --but if you cut your own stencil you'll have to provide your own justification for your column!" I wonder if he meant by that what I think you think he meant by that???

Auctorially speaking among the Angeleños, don't miss "Star, Bright" in the July Galaxy by our bright new star, Mark Clifton. Mark's Astounding story, "what Have I Done?" is already marked for hard cover in a Randomthology. And we think Gordon Dewey's "The Tooth" tops the August Fsy & Sci Fic (slick news: BoMcCo's mag is going monthly!)

Campbell has just taken 11,500 wds. worth of Dick deMille (Cecil B's son): watch for "Safety Valve". AE van Vogt is working on two novels for Simon & Schuster, while E. Mayne Hull has TV interest in two of her Artur Blord stories. Ray Bradbury will have an interplanetary Christmas story in the Xmas Esquire. (He trains north in the near future to conduct a 3-day seminar in short story writing, with emphasis on the fantasy form, at Mills College. And--boys--Mills is an all-girl institution!) Our Quattrocchi is in the current Astounding, with Wallace coming up in Galaxy, Evans in Sci-Fantasy, Reynolds in IF, Bloodstone in Amazing, Hernhuter and Sinclare and Jacobs in Vortex, Byrne in Other Worlds, Hart in Planet, Beaumont in Imagination, Springer in Startling, Magill in IF, Saphro in Planet, Phillips & Wolf in IF, and Kris Neville's "Man with the Fine Mind" has just been purchased by Ziff-Davis' bi-monthly FANTASTIC. Read LA authors for the best from the West!



WASFS

Freddie Curtis

Under the gleaming softness of the thurbite reflector, Elder Sprite sat happily contemplating the faces before him. He tapped softly on the table, coughed daintily and then began, "In the name of the West Azusa Scientific Federated Societies, I call this 832nd meeting to order. In view of the unusual experiment we are to participate in this evening, the chair will entertain a motion that the usual order of business be suspended."

"I so move," Ron Juan called from a far corner. "Second," added O. O. Phd.

"All in favor please raise your hands." Elder counted. "One, two, three, mmm, eight, mmmm, thirteen, mmmmmm, twenty-one in favor, Mundane and Random Thought abstaining. Motion carried. We will, however, hear the treasurer's report. L. Major Premise, please."

"There is exactly about 14½ credits in the treasury." L. Major Premise looked unhappy at the thoughtful scowls about him.

"Never mind, Elder Sprite smiled. "Soon our coffers will be overflowing. For the past eighteen years we have been meeting here each week. Few are left of the original handful that started "Project Past Machine" so quietly in 2434. Yet the ardor they instilled into the WASFS has never diminished. In spite of petty differences, internal strife, jealousies and personality clashes that are inherent in any scientific group, we have continued to work throughout for the common good. Tonight, after all these years of patient effort, we are going to test our 'Past Machine', go into time past, snatch from there both sight and sound, and relay it to the wispite screen you see before me on the table. Are there any last questions before we begin? Yes?" He nodded to Vague Concept.

"Are we using the wispite 5½ or 6½, because, you see, if we are using the 5½, I have a theory that—well, you see—that is—it's—"

"We've been over all that before. Let's get on with the experiment." Phannish Grouper's voice was sharp.

"The younger scientists never get a chance to express themselves," an undistinguishable voice mumbled from the left corner of the room.

Elder tapped softly on the table again. "Senior Scientist X. Marks Pott and Junior Scientist Raucous Laughter will now make the final adjustments. While they do so, however, I wish to say a few more words.

"Fellow scientists, if we are successful this evening, we will be able to see and hear into a world 500 years gone—back to 1952—only a few decades before the atomic holocaust that destroyed all civilization. Unparalleled fame will be our reward if we succeed in bringing our fellow men a true picture of the manners and mores of those seemingly lost days. If we fail, we always have eighteen more years to devote to this selfless task."

The next fifteen minutes were a hushed intensity of work. As X. Marks and Raucous directed, busy hands made connections, turned knobs, pressed levers, depressed controls, and set dials. Slowly, the black wispite circle lightened. Mundane fidgeted with a porquite knob, Raucous adjusted a loose moralium rod. Phannish twisted a grunionated dial upward until it would go no further. The circle became grey, then murky white. Dark spots danced on the wispite. Sweat danced on the foreheads of the scientists.

Suddenly, as the minimizer reached maximum intensity and the maximizer dwindled to zero, a clear and startling picture sprang to life on the screen. O. O. Phd gasped, then let out a long-drawn sigh. X. Marks hesitated, then pulled the lever marked "Audion". The machine sputtered a moment, the picture wobbled, cleared, and the room abruptly filled with sound.

". . . yet these hydrogen atoms supposedly created out of nothing in space form the—" The speaker was interrupted by a shout on his right.

"Ridiculous! That theory has been subjected to careful scrutiny by such leading astronomers and scientists as R. S. Richardson and George Gamow, and they discount the whole thing. And I—" The machine sputtered for a moment, and anxious hearts sent silent prayers to the Great God Void.

The sound faded in. "—the most practical theory to explain the 'red shift' is the expanding universe theory. After all, it is practical to assume that all galaxies recede from us with a speed that increases with their distance from us."

"Isn't that the Doppler effect?" inquired another voice.

"Yeah," he was answered by a slouched figure seated at one end of the room. "But did you ever consider that the 'red shift' might be explained by the fact that the energy loss in light is a function of the distance it travels, and so the—" Again the machine dimmed out and sputtered to a stop.

A babel of voices lifted in the hot room. Elder tapped anew. "Friends, please." His tone rose to mild command. "We are certainly the fortunate witnesses of a meeting of select scientists of their day." He began to quiver with suppressed excitement. "While the machine is being repaired" (he cast an anxious eye on the silent, dark screen), "I wish to instruct L. Major Premise to keep exact chronoscopic notes of everything we see and hear. This will revolutionize history. At last our efforts have borne fruit. This will put an end to the sly innuendo that our fellow researchers in the ASPS have been making. What has the Amateur Scientific Prognosticators Society to compare with this?" Applause greeted his words.

The soft hum of the machine silenced the group. Again they scanned the wispite circle eagerly as the picture re-formed. A slight, dark figure was speaking rapidly and earnestly. He waved a smoking white tube in his right hand as he spoke. "It was incredible," he said. "There, on the dead man's back, between his shoulder blades, was a soft, undulating, pulsing mass. It was alive! Before their astonished eyes, it flowed from the body. With difficulty they captured it in a container. The problem was to find out what it was, if it had any intelligence, and where it came from, as it was obviously extraterrestrial in origin. From there on—" The scene faded once more.

Another half hour went by as the frantic WASFS members coaxed their brainchild back to functioning. L. Major Premise gripped his chronoscope in both hands again and waited as the machine began to glow. A slim figure on the screen was addressing the group. "Doc Smith really came up with some fabulous weapons in the battle between the Terrestrials and the Nervians. If I remember correctly, the warship Boise was equipped with non-ferrous, ultra-screened beam dirigible torpedoes; penetrating rays; a 'violet' field; allotropic iron atomic bombs; (the WASFS scientists shuddered) penetrating gases of all sorts, corrosives and absolutely indestructible armor-piercing projectiles. Who else has been able to match that?"

"Well," he was answered by a small, fair, almost child-like figure half-hidden in a corner, "Hamilton didn't do so bad in the battle between the great star-kingdoms. They had the Disrupter, squirt transmission on their scrambler code, and invasion by stereo-images. That was a dilly."

A female figure, barely distinguishable from the males by her dress, raised one hand toward the desk in front of the room. The man seated casually thereon smiled for her to speak. "It may not be as spectacular, but I prefer the way Van solved his alien life-form problems with psychological weapons."

"Aw, he couldn't create them, that's why. As for me," a stocky, swart man said, "give me a ninth-order hyperspace drive, a time-warp or two, a fuel made of the dust of a metal heavier than plutonium or U-235, and—" Unaccountably the entire group from the past began to laugh uproariously. The volume of noise reverberated through the "Past Machine", and, as the last echo died, the wispite screen gave a convulsive, agonizing shudder and shattered into infiniteness.

With ashen faces the WASFSers looked at their machine. X. Marks wept openly, while Raucous wrung his hands in despair. Mundane and Random Thought clutched each other in unspoken grief. With grave faces they faced their leader. With dignity, Elder resumed his seat. His voice was soft in sorrow.

"We have not failed. This is only a temporary setback. I am certain that we will again be able to resume our experiments when we have enough in the treasury to make another wispite screen. But, in all fairness to ourselves, we should enter in our minutes that on this day, June 18, 2452, we were able, with our own developed 'Past Machine' to see and hear a meeting of distinguished men and women scientists of their day.

"It is too soon to make an evaluation rationally of their state of culture and science from what we have witnessed. All the recorded material will be subjected to the closest scrutiny and deepest study by the Senior and Junior Scientists in conjunction with the Executive Board, and when a decision is made as to its meaning, it will be referred to the membership at large for a vote. I ask you all to keep this experiment as a Society secret for the present. Thank you all for your excellent cooperation. The 832nd meeting of the WASFS is hereby adjourned."

DRAWN & QUARTERED

1. Critic of the Camera Department

The accession of Ed Clinton to the directorship of the LASFS came, apparently, like a nova bursting over the Society. Here was a quiet, thoughtful-looking little guy in horn rims and long hair, who, except for a few carefully-worded reviews delivered at the club, a couple of round-table discussions, and a critical article in this mag under a pseudonym, had not distinguished himself in the yak-and-hassle that is club life, and had seldom spoken up in arguments; yet, in his first few weeks of piloting LASFS, he displayed remarkable virtuosity and energy. It was surprising, to us at least, to see the guy work so hard and come up with such good meetings, who, just a few weeks before had been pretty much of an innocent bystander.

The reason was not far to seek. Although a stef reader of some fourteen years and a fan for ten, Ed doesn't parade himself—he covers his flickering genius with a bushel basket at almost all times. We heard him, one meeting some weeks before he became director, parry Forry's "How about a book review? You have been reading enough—" with a shy "Well, uh..." and no review.

"I hate to be asked to review something someone likes, and then have to pan it," he began recently, and then went on to praise the book to the skies. His approach, we find, is often like this: the soft-shoe, or step-on-no-toes attitude, we might call it. But when Ed gets wound up, the soft shoes are equally often traded for steel-toed boots: witness "Gentlemen, there is a monster in our midst..." from a critique of one of our self-styled good magazines.

Behind the careful wording and the pounce-with-both-feet lie much research and thought; his pronouncements don't come off the cuff, but are written and read aloud. They are quite similar to papers delivered before a technical society, and, like such papers, are not infrequently reprinted; several have appeared in this magazine.

Ed puts the time it's worth into his fan activities; and for him, it's a lot. We asked him how much time he spent as LASFS director: "Outside of Thursdays, it used to take up about two evenings a week," was the answer. And the product

for our money, was worth every minute.

Before he came to LASFS, Ed Clinton was of course born (7:10 am, Feb. 20,1926) educated (Cal, History major) and so on. The "so on" includes starting a publishing house (Trover Hall, in San Francisco, claimed the honor of being the second straight-fantasy publisher, produced one book and then folded), writing a book of short stories for Trover Hall, titled "Puzzle Box," which now exists only in the hands of a few elite collectors, and on the top shelf of the Clinton closet, and producing the first five minutes of a puppetoon-style fantasy film. His accomplice in these enterprises was a lawyer-fan named George Leonis who in addition to co-sponsoring the swindles, drew the cover for Puzzle Box.

"I made a lot of mistakes then that I wouldn't and won't now," says Ed, "but I don't regret any of it." He lives now in sober splendor in a walk-up flat with Audrey, his wife; in typical fan style they announced their coming wedding on the same night Ed was nominated for director. Ed has, by our standards, more than the usual number of bookcases and orange boxes full of stef books and old Astoundings; the wall above his desk is plastered with about the normal number of Bonestell reprints, stills from stefilms, and pages from the Gnome fantasy calendar; but his living room boasts that gem of gems, a Bonestell original, which Audrey acquired at the Westercon a couple of years back.

"I'm a conservative in science fiction," Ed tells us, and goes on to explain: neither a shunner of aloha shirts nor, in his reading, an old-timer who yearns for the good old Gernsback days, he simply likes Campbell and Astounding. No amount of brazen ballyhoo, to name one, or subtle sophistication, to name another approach from the new magazines, will woo him away from the plausible, sturdily-written, scientifically based story, unmarred by touches of "new writing", screwball philosophies and this-must-not-happen. Paradoxically enough Ed has been an admirer of Hubbard's stories for a long time. Hal Clement, however, is his favorite; his article on Clement is coming up in SF Advertiser.

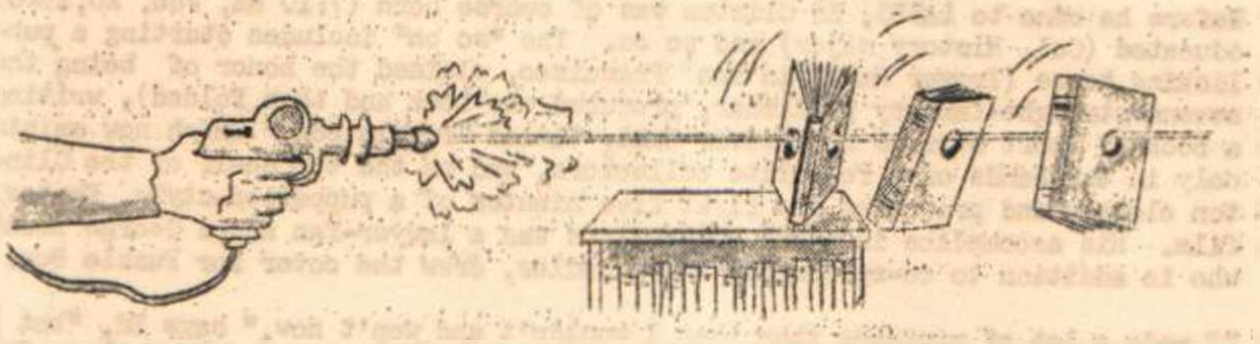
As a missionary of fandom, Clinton isn't doing so well these days. He's in charge of the Camera Dept. at May Co. Downtown; we went in to find out how long he's been a fan, and immediately another salesman, Norm Silverman, began razzing us about "Buck Rogers". A few minutes later, he began talking about the degeneracy of current stef as compared to the past ten years, and we divined that Ed had been trying to sell him on the stuff. No sale. Silverman, by the way, is the artist of Ed's portrait at the head of this article.

On the subject of LASFS, Ed waxes voluble, determined, and militant. "I like the club. That's why I'm a member. Nothing irks me quite so much as the attitude in the minds, or in the words, at least, of some members that coming to meetings is only a habit, not a pleasure." Feuds, business meetings, and constitutions to the contrary, Ed thinks LASFS is here to stay.

Ed and Audrey edited the last issue of Shaggy. Any theories that Ed is an old fuddy-duddy, an arch-conservative, or anything of the sort (he occasionally admits to the second classification, saying he's for Taft) were thrown into confusion. Made up in the form of an amphisbaena, the heads were labeled respectively "The Lighter Side" and "The Sober Side". Edited by Audrey and Ed, the zine was bright and joyful even in its soberest pages. Innovation followed eccentricity in a dazzling show that made the mag glow like a first issue.

Looking over our shoulder, our subject just added some more bits of interest to our view of his versatile life: He reads Scientific American, collected National Geographic, and acquired most of his stef library by running a book club: he got his own copies free!

—JHW



Books of the Quarter

Bleiler-Dikty--Imagination Unlimited
Bleiler-Dikty--Years Best S F Novels
Blish --Jack of Eagles
Caldwell --Devil's Advocate
Campbell --Astounding Anthology
Campbell --Cloak of Aesir
Clarke --Exploration of Space
Clarke --Sands of Mars
Cody --The Witching Night
del Rey --Marooned on Mars
Derleth --Night's Yawning Peal
Gilmore --Space Hawk
Gold --Galaxy Reader of S.F.
Gray --Murder in Millenium VI
Greenberg --Five S. F. Novels
Harvey --Arm of Mrs. Egan and Others
Howard --Sword of Conan
Hunter --Find the Feathered Serpent
Hyams --998
Jones --Son of the Stars
Keller --Tales From Underwood
Kornbluth --Takeoff
Latham --Five Against Venus
Lengyel --The Atom Clock (play)
Lesser --Earthbound
Lewis --The Missing Years
Neill --The Elegant Witch
Padgett --Robots Have No Tails
Simak --City
Sohl --The Haploids
Stern --Eidolon
Stevens --Heads of Cerberus
Taine --Green Fire (reprint)
van Vogt --Destination Universe
van Vogt --Mixed Men
van Vogt --Weapon Makers

Book Reviews

Takeoff, by C. M. Kornbluth, is the slickest example of the hardboiled detective formula used as a science-fiction yarn I have yet seen. The story is full of private eye cliches and yet it turns out to be fairly good s-f in spite of itself. It's about a young engineer who, fired from the A. E. C. for violent insubordination, is hired by the "American Society for Space Flight," an amateur rocket society with finances worthy of a large corporation, to put the finishing touches on their fullscale "model" rocket ship. When our man becomes suspicious of the setup and tries to get the local A.E.C. representative interested, the rat-race really begins in earnest. If you can stand the preaching in this yarn (which is dedicated to the proposition that whatever the United States government does is all fouled up like Hogan's goat) you'll enjoy this fast-moving yarn. Doubleday, $2.75.

—Dave Fox

Sands of Mars by Arthur C. Clarke: In many respects an expanded and fictionalized group of extracts from his non-fiction Exploration of Space Sands of Mars is told with wry humor and is characterized by the firm grasp of facts that has come to be Clarke's hallmark. Using as before the vehicle of the innocent---almost —bystander, Clarke injects scientific data with a savoir faire that would embarass Heinlein. Gnome, $2.75

—Anthony More

Book Reviews (cont.)

Destination: Universe! by A. E. Van Vogt is an anthology of ten of Van Vogt's short stories and novelettes. Several of these are reprints, which seems inevitable nowadays, and some, we suspect, are re - reprints. This, however, detracts in no way from the excellence of the individual stories . Included are Far Centaurus, The Enchanted Village, Dear Pen Pal, A Can of Paint, and The Rulers. It is interesting to note that, no matter what the situation may be that Van involves his characters in, they seldom if ever resort to violence. Consequently, the stories could not be further removed from the "thud-and-blunder" school, but they lose nothing in well-paced action and suspense. Unfortunately, at times van Vogt tends to get too involved in his stories to suit this reviewer, and occasionally we get the impression that Van himself is not too sure where he is in his plot. However, the stories in this anthology seem to have been selected with an eye to clarity of plot. In brief, Destination: Universe! goes on this reviewer's recommended list. --Leigh Randall

Murder in Millenium VI by Curme Gray is one of the most puzzling books that this reviewer has ever read. Clearly science-fiction--or is it?--the style of the writing, the characters which inhabit Millenium VI, the society of that world, and the intricate way in which the author shifts the viewpoint of the story, clearly class this volume as one of the weirdest to hit the market for many a year. The society of that far-off time bears a resemblance, I am told, to that of Ancient Egypt. It is a hierarchical matriarchy whose people have their physical wants attended to in so thorough a fashion by their mechanized servants that the very knowledge of death is to them a surprising and shocking thing. As for murder.....? One thing which struck me as interesting was the distinction which the author makes between clairvoyance and telepathy, both, by the way, mechanized. The book cannot be recommended unreservedly for purchase, but it merits inspection. By the way, Anthony Boucher is reported to have said that the book was not worthy of review. Tsk. --Earle Princeton

Sword of Conan by Robert E. Howard is weird adventure-fantasy at its best. For those who care for this type of story, the book is well worth adding to their library. For sheer bloodthirstiness and swashbuckling adventure, no one, in this reviewer's opinion, has ever been able to surpass Howard. The book is part of a series published by Gnome Press, which eventually plans to have the entire Conan saga between hard covers. Recounting of the plot is pointless , since it involves a succession of captures and escapes, intrigue and violence, black magic and sex, wild debauchery and physical privation. If this recap of the elements which make up the book does not whet your fancy, it should at least tickle your curiosity--for along with all this is some extremely fine writing, indeed. In the opinion of many, P. Schuyler Miller, for instance, the Conan tales of Howard are classics. --Eph Konigsberg

City by Clifford Simak is a study of the probable future of man as it might be should the development of technology make possible the ultimate decentralization. The book's first story (yes, this is a collection of shorts--well tied together, though) introduces the reader to the beginning of the process and, after a few more shorts, develops a second theme, that of the development of intelligence and speech in dogs. From there on Simak builds up an animal and robot society based upon the Jainist philosophy, that of absolute reverence for life. This, of course, leads to some physical inconsistencies which Simak does not square away. Indeed, the insistence of that philosophy that life is

(continued on p. 10111)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

May 14, 1952

Dear Forry:

Thanks very very much for the collection of the LA fanzine. I've taken the time to read several, although not all, and I'm tremendously impressed with the verve and activity in them. Please put me down as a constant subscriber, associate member, or whatever it takes to continue getting them—and, of course, bill me.

Main purpose of this letter is to comment specifically on Anthony More's A PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE FICTION in the December '51 issue. Now this is precisely the kind of stuff I need. Where is science fiction going? The more I read of it, the more I become confused as to just what is wanted by the editors, and why do they want it? An article, such as More's clarifies a good deal for me, as well as voicing almost item for item my own opinion.

Quoting from a letter I recently wrote Horace Gold, "There is one thing in your present policy of holding down to the personal conflict which raises a question in my mind. Speaking not as a writer, who is willing to try whatever his dear old editor wants him to do, but as a fan--I personally like the smell of space, the cosmic awesomeness, the chill of an alien being. I like that thread of strange incomprehensibility. While I react against the horse opera turned out to space, I hope we do not abandon the grandeur and vastness of time and cosmos. We need for science fiction to grow more mature through better handling of psychological conflict, but we need to keep the action against a vast backdrop. I hope we will not turn our backs so far on space opera that we will forget space."

In reading More's article, a wonderfully thoughtful piece, I see where Frank Q. also says, "We are losing the grander sense that s-f is so capable of expressing."

If you ever have a meeting devoted to the subject of "Where is science fiction going?", please invite me. That's the subject I want to hear discussed. I wouldn't have much to contribute, because I don't know. But I surely would like to find out what others, who have been more active in writing and fandom than I, do think.

Again, thanks for your thoughtfulness in sending along the zines. I haven't any of the collector instinct in me, so I rather think I should return them to you when I've finished reading them, for you to send on to someone else. What a pleasure to be even loosely and remotely connected with the club!

Best,

Mark Clifton

(Editor's note: Mark Clifton is the author of the stories "What Have I Done", which recently appeared in Astounding, and "Star, Bright", which appeared in Galaxy.)

A story like that comes once in a lifetime.

* * *

Among their fancies, the editors of MF&SF have a particular feeling for items of historical interest. Thus, as a part of their reprint selections, they are continually dipping into the far past of science fiction and coming up with something which, nine times out of ten, is as dull as it is historically interesting. Sometimes they come up with something that certainly isn't fantasy and could hardly be classified as science fiction—such as the Thurber fable and the E. E. Hale "world of if" tale.

Quite often one gets the impression one is reading a textbook on the history of science fiction. Like when they used to make us read all the dullest possible classics in junior high school English courses.

Nix.

* * *

Some weeks back, LASFS director Forrest Ackerman said, by way of starting a discussion, that we would now "talk on the subject of Love," meaning of course Love by Richard Wilson in the ten-current issue of MF&SF.

The discussion which ensued was primarily futile, but it is not futile to comment on the appearance of Love in a science-fiction magazine.

Unlike Old Man Henderson, Love was not science fiction. It was, in fact strikingly unoriginal, since the idea embraced was a lot older than science fiction. Insofar as the basic plot of the story was concerned, it made utterly no difference whether the characters were a blind girl and a Martian, a blind girl and an ugly man, or a blind girl and a Negro, etc. By sticking the plot onto a pseudo-science-fiction background, Wilson managed to satisfy Boucher-McComas' yearning for the supremely literate in the field of science fiction. This writer would buy the Ladies' Home Journal if he wanted to read that kind of material—which had nothing to do with whether it was good writing or not.

However, the main issue to be taken with the story is a basic one, in fact one of the prime points of contention on the "science-fiction" appearing, with notable exceptions, in MF&SF. Without attempting a definition of science fiction, let us say nonetheless that the scientific method and attitude, at least to some degree, should be applied by the writer.

How mature is a science fiction which assumes that the sexual response patterns of two totally—totally—different organisms could tally, or, granting that the general physical structure of the two biologic forms might be very similar, would for a moment tolerate the idea that the sexual mechanics of two beings which had evolved totally independently and in totally different environments might possible permit of mating? How mature is a science fiction which is concerned only with the verbal abstractions of a situation, that pays not the slightest attention to subsequent scientific facts. Data: this girl never saw in her life. In science fiction, the actual form her reaction to seeing takes would be of prime importance. The emotional problem, therefore, must be treated with this scientific fact in mind. That is the difference between science fiction and non-science fiction. Is it not strange that, in truth, science fiction deals with the realities of situations, whereas non-science fiction usually deals with the non-realities?

* * *

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction for August, 1952.
(Out of fifteen stories in this issue, eight are "science fiction", and two of these latter are reprints.)

Hobson's Choice by Alfred Bester: In the words of the editors, this is "a superlative variation on a classic theme". In actuality, it is a reminder that other ages were not so golden as they are reputed. It is not particularly superlative, and, like so many of the stories in MF&SF, it is a variation on a theme only in the sense of being marginalia: blown-up shavings from the edges of science-fictional concepts. Nice and light.

The Tooth by G. Gordon Dewey: While this is undoubtedly the best s-f story in the issue, nonetheless it appears in MF&SF because it offers the one thing that Boucher and McComas seem unable to resist--a cute gimmick. The Tooth is told in reverse; otherwise there would be no story (which of course makes no difference, since the construction of a story is a part of its effectiveness).

Nine-Finger Jack by Anthony Boucher: This one is a reprint, and, like all too many of MF&SF reprints, is entirely too recent to merit reprinting. Nine-Finger Jack is one of those MF&SF stories that is science fiction only in the most general sense. Actually it is a fable, placed against a typical science fiction background. In truth, it is an exceedingly funny story, and there should be no objection at all to its inclusion in an s-f publication. The trouble is, there are entirely too many of the bouncy little light-weights in MF&SF. Frivolous is the word.

Extra-Curricular by Caren Drusai: Another new writer. MF&SF has done a lot for the field in bringing into print new writers. This story, the editors feel, is "appealingly offtrail". I guess so. More lightweight frivolity.

The Sling by Richard Ashby: An amusing idea, rather poorly written. Takes entirely too long to get going, dawdles, gets involved in side issues, and after all is said and done, isn't a particularly novel idea, and certainly is not the effective political satire the blurb indicates.

Listen by Gordon R. Dickson: Exceedingly well-written, it is of a type that appears quite regularly in MF&SF. Here is another variation on the Earthman-conquered people relationship. Messrs. Boucher and McComas seem to have a fixation on this point. Here again the nasty old Earthmen are messing up an inoffensive civilization. Particularly annoying, and typical of MF&SF: all that matters is the theme; there is no attention to background detail. Heinlein would never sell to MF&SF.

Nor Iron Bars by Dan Kelly and Cleve Cartmill: Well enough done, veritable fantasy. Hasn't this idea been used before? The usual snap ending.

The Hour of Letdown by E. B. White: A reprint from the New Yorker. Read the New Yorker instead of MF&SF. This is simply a rypical New Yorker joke which happens to make use of the s-f concept of the mechanical brain. Trite, obvious, and another in the long and apparently endless line of MF&SF chuckle specials. Not science fiction.

A thoroughly typical issue. MF&SF may be the top fantasy magazine—this writer bears no particular opinions on fantasy. It is not one of the top science fiction magazines, for the material which it publishes under that label, while usually well-written, highly literate, and clever as hell, is as light and frothy as the foam on a bubble bath, and stands or falls, almost without exception, on the cleverness of its theme and the trickiness of its execution. The simple truth is that this is the Magazine of Fantasy and no more, and the appendage of "and Science Fiction" is just a lute. Outspoken admirers of August Derleth, Boucher and McComas also regard science fiction as only a branch of fantasy, and are producing a highly competent magazine of a particular and specific type one would expect of individuals holding that opinion of science fiction in mind. A continuing compendium of marginalia and historical interest, MF&SF, while once in its lifetime might produce an Old Man Henderson, will never produce a Heinlein or van Vogt, a Nerves or a new concept. It is instead a magazine of fables for grown-ups.

Book Reviews (cont.)

sacred leads to a rather depressing note at the end of the book. The ants are taking over. (Please note, however, that while the stories themselves end in futility, there is no sign of this in the introduction and the entr'act comedies which form so delightful a part of the book.) Might I mention in passing that Simak also weaves in the "loper" life form of Jupiter, a theory of multi-dimensional universes, discourses on robot psychology, and supermen. Pretty good book, and published by Gnome Press, which is doing right well for itself nowadays.

LASFS SALUTES SAN DIEGO'S WESTERCON V

Publishing (cont.)

Open on the desk is a large looseleaf notebook with standard blanks for p a s t i n g up pages. Beside it are the galleys from the typesetters. He cuts it up and fits it. When he gets done, he'll send the paste job to the typesetters, they will set the lines of type into the frames, and then the mats can be made. Before the mats are made up, though, the pages will be run off on a hand press, and the page proofs sent to the editor for proofreading, and after that there are the corrections. And the deadline's just a week away, dammit.

It's 4:30. He sticks the pasting he's finished into a large envelope with the typesetter's address already printed on it, and drops it into the out basket.

A week later he relaxes. He met the deadline. Wednesday. He takes ten manuscripts off the pile. That leaves only 187 more before he comes to Joe Greenhorn's story. He sits down and slits ten flaps, throws the letters into the wastebasket without reading them. They're all too long anyway and to hell with them. The stories are no damn good.

Take the first one. It opens:

The half moon of Callisto came up over the jagged spires of Crescenti Mountain on the equator of Ganymede, casting sharp white shadows that bit into the darkness, hinting at the danger that lurked there.

God, what crap. What's the ending?

Jan took Evelyn into his arms and drew her close. It had been a tough battle. But now--her breast pressed against his naked hairy chest in surrender. The danger was over. Or was it? Love held its dangers too. Recklessly he kissed her, feeling her body respond.

Not such a helluva bad ending. He thumbs through the story. God, what a lot of blocks! (A block is a long paragraph.) Might be a good story, if it was chopped up. The hell with it. He sticks it in the return envelope and tosses it in the out basket. At 4:30 the out basket holds nine envelopes. One story looked good enough to read. Too damned tired today, though.

Two weeks later Joe Greenhorn's envelope is two feet up in the air. Underneath it are stories that came in since his did. The page proofs are being rushed out. Also, there's the next issue to figure out. Let's see...

He goes to the files and takes out three short stories, then spends twenty minutes doing arithmetic on length of novelettes to get the right wordage for the magazine. It works out okay, roughly. He takes an envelope with the typesetter's name printed on it and shoves the pile of manuscripts into it and tosses

it into the out basket. That takes care of the next issue. He puts the cards for those stories in the active file for that issue, taking them off inventory. Inventory's too damn big now anyway. Any day the owner will give orders to cut down.

Three days later the page proofs are out of the way. Nothing to do now for that issue. Get some of the damn slushpile out of the way. Joe Greenhorn's envelope comes out with fifteen others and goes into a briefcase to be taken home that night. At midnight, bleary-eyed, the editor takes it out of the envelope.

Get to bed! his wife shouts. Shut up, the editor shouts. He almost tears the first sheet in his fit of anger, then squints at it over his cold ham sandwich, fumbles for his coffee, and almost spills it on the whole damn manuscript.

Thlbllggbb lifted one of his heads cautiously, he reads, and peered over the vertebra of the Thlllmmm across the red sands of Mars. Oh hell, another Edgar Rice Burroughs. What's the ending? He reads, Jan took Evelyn into his arms and drew her close. It had been a tough battle. God, why don't they mimeograph those endings? Save typing them out for every story. To hell with it. He shoves it in the return envelope. Are you coming to bed? his wife screams.

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The job of an editor is nervewracking. His treatment of incoming manuscripts lies somewhere between the two extremes I've painted here. Where it lies varies depending on mood, size of the inventory, and fifty-seven other factors. Sometimes it reaches one or the other extreme in actuality, although very seldom. And it depends on the editor. Campbell is known to have spent more time with a writer giving instructions on rewrite than it would take to write the story himself. Gold has a couple of people read every story he thinks he might want to buy. Lots of offices won't buy a story unless two or more readers like the story. In some, one man reads and decides what to buy.

Aside from selection of stories to buy, the editor's job is purely technical. The bought stories go into filing cabinets with their cards. Gold spends hours and days balancing the contents of an issue as to subject matter of stories. So do some of the others. The manuscripts are sent to the typesetter who does the work. The galleys are proofread for errors and sent back. Then, when corrected, they are pasted into blank cardboard pages that the typesetter uses to set the type into pages. Along with that goes the job of putting in illustrations.

The editor's job consists mostly of selection and adding final touches. Sometimes he makes up illustration orders to give to an artist to make an illo fitting the story. Sometimes he makes a cover order, but just as often he buys a picture from a free-lance artist that would do the job. He also has long talks with artists about his needs. It's up to them to try to meet them. If they do they make sales to him. If they don't, he regrets wasting time on them in the first place.

The main tools of the editor are the scissors and the pastepot. He uses his typewriter occasionally to write editorials, copy the letters for the letter column into a form the typesetter can handle. His job is far more executive than menial. The menial tasks are more farmed out in publishing than in any other field. The typesetter, the photo-engraver, the printer, and the distributing company handle all the work. They may be in the same city, or in other cities. It's handled by mail anyway, and sometimes by phone.

His problems are legion. He has other executives in the company to contend

with. An art director may differ with him on an illo. An absurd instance is one that happened. A cover was accepted by the editor. The art director liked the central theme but not the background. The artist did it over with the same central theme and a new background. Then the background was okay, but the central theme wasn't. He used the okayed background with a new central theme.

The circulation figures are always bothering him. A certain issue dropped twenty thousand in sales. Why? The cover? Maybe. Maybe not. A certain issue jumped ten thousand in sales. The cover? One of the authors? Which one?

Deadlines plague the editor. A printing company isn't owned by the publisher. It does work for other publishers, too. If they don't get the mats to him on time, he can't stall the other publishers. The issue will have to be skipped, and that can't happen. It would cost as much as putting out the issue, and bring in nothing. Also, the next issue would have a new editor.

An editor likes two kinds of people. Writers he can rely on to write consistently good stories of required lengths, and agents who can come up with the same kind of stuff on short notice. Any editor will tell you that both are hard to find.

The average writer gets his own ideas and writes them blind. He tries out this and that until he makes a sale. Then he studies what he did and tries to repeat it. If he succeeds, he's afraid to experiment any more. He turns out the same kind of stuff he's already sold. He becomes known for that particular kind of story. Maybe famous.

Every agent has his own ideas about how to deal with an editor. Being somewhat acquainted with editors and agents, I have something of a perspective on both. Editors don't like agents who send them stories any ass would know they don't want. Editors like agents who send in stories that answer somewhat the expressed requirements of the editor. When editors don't like an agent they get hostile about it.

Editors either like a writer or they don't. If they do, they read every story he sends in whether they buy it or not. Until they have read a dozen in a row they can't buy. If the editors don't like a writer, they read his stuff so they can tell him explicitly why they couldn't buy it. (That's a loaded sentence.) If the writer knows the editor doesn't like him, and the editor knows he knows, he doesn't bother to read the stuff he sends.

Now for some generalizations that hold true with fair consistency. If the editor has had your story for more than two weeks and you haven't heard from him, he hasn't opened the envelope yet. Give him time. If you jump him about it, you may get your story back right away without it having been read. Unless you are making regular sales to a specific market, don't count on selling a story. Don't spend the dough before you get it. When you finish a story, figure that it may take a year to sell it.

One last word of advice. Don't take advice from anyone. It's generally no good anyway. Anybody that's sold a few million words can spout off authoritatively. There are no rules. I've seen an editor buy a story because the manuscript looked like it had been thumbed by every other editor in the business. I've seen one go through a stack and reject without looking every manuscript that wasn't fresh.

Editors are human beings. Generally harassed ones.